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The Honorable C. E. Wilson
The Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for your letter of 19 February 1953
on the Chinese Communist employment of "brain washing"
techniques on U.S. personnel within their custody.

We considered this matter at some length on
Thursday the 19th at the luncheon of the Psychological
Strategy Board members, which [redacted] attended, and
are now engaged in a close study of the matter here in
CIA. As you may know, we have been following this
subject for some time. I was able to make a preliminary
report on the results of our studies to the PSS last
Thursday and set forth the outlines of a program which
will help to meet the objectives you have in mind.

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We very much appreciate the materials which you
sent over with your letter and will welcome any further
opportunity to pool our intelligence on this problem.

Sincerely yours,

Allen W. Dulles
Director

RELong:aml - 27 Feb 53
Distr: O&I - addressee

1 - [redacted]
2 - Signer w/basic

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OSD review(s) completed.

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

19 FEB 1953

Dear Mr. Dulles:

The Department of Defense, in considering a number of questions concerning Chinese Communist employment of so-called "brain washing" techniques on U.S. personnel within their custody, has come to the tentative conclusion that the Chinese Communists may have provided the United States and the free world with an effective psychological warfare issue which can be turned against them.

At the present time the evidence available suggests that in spite of some continuing physical abuse on the part of the Communists, many of our prisoners of war are being relatively well treated insofar as their bodily wants are concerned. However, there is ample evidence that some at least are also subjected to intensive indoctrination programs designed to convert them into "hard core" Communists and deliberate propaganda agents against the United States. These personnel receive many hours per day of lectures and discussions by political instructors. They are rewarded with better food and living conditions if they "learn their lessons well". Some few have already been released or permitted to escape with instructions to return to their own units and preach the Communist "party line" to their friends. Others have been exploited over the radio, in the mails, and in Communist films.

The Soviet world, utilizing the "confessions" and statements of such personnel as well as other means of direct and indirect propaganda, has accused the United States in particular, and to a lesser degree the United Nations Command in Korea, of atrocities extending from murder and rape to biological warfare. While official denials have been issued, the need for an effective counter propaganda weapon has become increasingly apparent.

Moreover, the fact that certain information concerning this Communist activity has appeared in the U.S. press and may soon appear abroad suggests an urgent need for prior action exposing these facts if the United States, and indeed the UN, are not to be subjected to increasingly severe domestic pressures concerning the entire repatriation issue. It is considered that an appropriately coordinated release describing Communist attempts to indoctrinate our personnel, and explaining the techniques employed, may, if spontaneously issued, allay natural public fears, and in fact provide the initial point for an effective counter propaganda campaign designed to create revulsion throughout the world concerning the Communist program.

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SPECIALTY INFORMATION

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In this connection I am enclosing copies of a proposed press release and background information summary developed in the Department of the Army, as well as a preliminary study outlining a possible counter propaganda program based upon charging the Communists with a "new" form of war crime, and a new refinement in atrocity techniques; namely, "mind murder" or mendicide. At the same time the Department of Defense is undertaking an immediate program of deindoctrination and screening of available personnel and is forming a qualified professional investigating team to gather scientific evidence concerning the effectiveness of the Communist techniques.

If you agree that the program outlined above and the issuance of a press release have merit, I suggest that an integrated national psychological strategy program be developed by the staff in consultation with the interested departments as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely yours,

C. Wilson

Enclosures - 3

- 1 - Proposed Press Release
- 2 - Background Information Summary
- 3 - Preliminary Study on Counter Propaganda Program

Honorable Allen W. Dulles
Director
Central Intelligence Agency

19 Feb 53 -

Mr. Dulles has discussed this paper with General Smith, who indicated he was favorably disposed toward the program outlined and the issuance of the press release.

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*Copy of this (tr., plus attachments),
given to Barnemann 21 Feb, for use
in his discussions with [redacted] and 25X
in the formulation of program.*

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